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THE OBSERVATOR.

A Story from Amersham. *Remarks thereon. Of* Lent. *Its Religious and Civil Institutions. The Advantage of the Observance thereof, in Relation to the Fishery.*

From **Wednesday**, February 5. to **Saturday**, February 8. 170⅚.

Country-m. MAster, I won't show you the *Rehearsal*, because I know you can't forbear him; and I want to have a What-d'ye-call-'um, a miscellaneous Discourse at this present Time.

Obs. Agreed, *Roger*; I am conformable to thee, tho' not to High-Church; speak, Man, what Subject now?

Country-m. Let me take one Sup of *October*, to whet my Whittle, and then ——. Here's a Complaint come to me from *Amersham*, a Place somewhere in the Queen's Dominions, and it is this:

A substantial Yeoman, that is an honest Fellow, like my Country self, had the Misfortune to have some Lambs kill'd by Dogs this Winter, and he finding, that the Dogs were likely to kill more of his Lambs than the Butcher, and so, for ought he knew, his Landlord might come short of his Rent; he set a Trap to catch the Lamb-eaters, and caught one the first Night; then he sets his Trap again, baited with a Lamb, and caugh another Dog; this last Dog, it seems, was a Hound of Quality, and belong'd to Mrs. *Mannor*, who arrested the honest Husband-man in an Action of Trespass, for killing her Dog. Now, is this fair? At this Rate, all my Lambs must go to the Dogs, and not to the Pot and Spit. Upon my Country Word, if my Lord's Greyhound, his Setting-Dog, or my Lady's Lap-Dog, should come to devour my Lambs, I would beat their Brains out.

Obs. From hence we may observe several Things.

1. That the Dog committed a Trespass upon the Man, and not the Man upon the Dog.

2. If the Hound was a Dog of Quality, it was of ill Qualities, and that Madam ought to have taught him more Manners, than to be a Thief, a Lamb-stealer.

3. The Man was not guilty of Murder, but of Dog-Slaughter only; nay, were I to be one of his Jury, I should bring it in *Se Defendendo*; for what he did, was in Defence of his Property, which is in Defence of himself.

4. That the Lady kept her Dog to short Commons at home, when he was forc'd to ravage and steal abroad for a Belly full.

5. I do believe it is legal for a Lady of a Mannor, after she has put on her Jockey Boots, and tuck'd her Petticoats above her Trouzers, to ride a Hunting with her Hounds in the Mannor-Lands; but to hunt Game only, and not to let her Dogs go a hunting by themselves, and to kill the Tenants Lambs.

Roger, tho' our Parliaments have been very careful in making Laws for the Preservation of the Game of the Kingdom, they have been as just in making Laws for the Preservation of the Country-man's Stock; and have ty'd themselves up to Rules in Hunting, that they shall hunt only in such Seasons, wherein they can do the Land-holders least Damage. There's a little Book lately printed, giving an Account of all the Laws in force relating to the Preservation of the Game of the Kingdom; buy that Book for your Instruction in this Point.

Country-m. That I will, Master. The next Point, is this: I was consputing with some Company t'other Day about the Observation of *Lent*, and I will give you some Lines that were written by a Person present, on purpose to draw you into a Discourse on that Subject; the Lines are these.

Ye Men of Lent,
Leave off your Cant,
Talk not of Imitation;
'Twas his Divinity,
Supported his Humanity,
Without the Help of Bread.
Ye may as well take Clay,
And put it on a blind Man's Eyes,
And bid him wash and see,
Because our Saviour did.

Obs. What sort of Rhimes are these, *Roger!* Did'st thou take them from the *Scots Hudibras?*

Country-m. I don't ask you about the Rhimes, but about the Reason of the Thing.

Obs. Roger, I shan't enter into the Merits of the Cause, in Respect to Religion, because I would not affront Mr. *Rehearsal*, who will call me a Blasphemer, if I question the Authority or Power of High-Church; which will sooner part with a Page of Scripture, than a Holy-day, and would as soon see the Church tumble down, as have a bit of Paint wip'd from its Windows.

The first Institution of *Lent*; is very ancient, and founded on no Religious Account; but for a Political and Physical Reason, for the Preservation of Health, and the Encrease of Cattel: By abstaining from Flesh at that Season of the Year, and feeding on low Diets, as Herbs and Fish, the Blood is sweeten'd, and brought to a due Temperament; and at this Season, all Creatures being in Breed, the State order'd no Flesh to be eaten, in order to encrease the Species.

But the Popish Pennance-Mongers turn'd this Civil Institution into a Religious Practice, and so brought over the State to the Church, as their Successors, the High-flying Clergy, endeavour now to do; tho' their abstaining from Meat in *Lent*, is but an easy Mortification, at the Rate they live; for they live on the best

best of Fish, Oil, Wine, Beer, &c. and glutton on these, as they before did on Meat.

Country-m. I could be a Papish in respect of Eating in *Lent*. I love Fish, Master; but like our Puss Cat, I don't care to wet my Foot in catching it, unless, like St. *Peter*'s Fishes, they would come with Money in their Mouths.

Obs. It is worthy our Consideration, how Religious Institutions have been perverted to Civil Concerns, and how Civil to Religious. Thus *Lent*, which was instituted as a Civil and Political Advantage, was taken into the Church, and stamp'd with Religion; and the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, instituted in Remembrance of the Body Crucify'd, and the Blood spilt, for the Remission of our Sins, is appointed in Civil Concerns, as a Test and Qualification for Secular Employments.

And it is observable, that Institutions and Ordinances thus chang'd from the Design'd and Intent of their first Sanctions, have become destructive of their own Force and Virtue. Thus is the valuable Worth of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper depreciated, by making it subservient to mean and secular Ends; and Men not qualify'd to take the Sacrament, do it to qualify themselves for an Employment, and so eat and drink their own Damnation in a future State, to make Provision for the Flesh in this Life. And thus the Fast of *Lent*, by being made a Religious Concern, looses all the Benefits and Advantages of its Civil Institution.

I have, *Roger*, in some measure, always observ'd the Fast of *Lent*, and have found a Physical Advantage by it. Tho' I never did it on the Score of Religion, yet I seldom miss'd hearing the *Lent*-Sermons; not that I did it in Obedience to the Church, but as my Duty to take all Opportunities of hearing the Word of God; and many a good Sermon have I hear'd in *Westminster*-Abbey, occasion'd by the Fast of *Lent*. For my part, I neither consider the Place, the Time, or Occasion, provided I hear a good Sermon.

But now, *Roger*, let us speak one Word to the Observation of *Lent*, in respect to its Politick Use, and herein we shall find the Disuse of it has been as detrimental, as the re-establishing and re-ordaining of it would be of publick Profit.

Much more, when the Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland* are united, than before. If the Fishery be not now improv'd, we are Men blinded to our own Interest, and careless of our greatest Blessings. What vast Profit now does accrue to our Kingdom, by the Herring and *Newfoundland* Fishery! The Herring and poor Jack being exported to foreign Countries, become our Staple. And consider again how much of this Profit is owing to the Observance of *Lent* in the Popish Countries, where we Trade?

It is the Policy of all Trading Countries to consume as much as is convenient of their own Manufactures at Home. How little Fish have we spent in *England*? Some small Countries consume more of our Fish, which they take in our Seas, or which we transport to them, than we consume our selves. We think to no purpose, when we project the Encrease of Manufactures and Stock, and make no Provision for the Consumption.

I know the Enemies of our National Interest, will object and say, That the Fish we export to foreign Parts, comes Home with vast Interest to the Merchant, and great Duties to the Crown; and what we expend at Home, is of Advantage very inconsiderable to what we export.

It must be granted, that what we send Abroad, is of great Advantage by the Returns, but the Consumption at Home, is not to be neglected, for it will be of great Advantage to the Queen and Kingdom.

To the Queen in her Duties upon Salt. There is a Draw-back allow'd of the Duties upon Salt on all Fish transported to foreign Parts, but none upon what is expended at Home. And if a greater Consumption were procur'd, the Revenue would be considerably encreas'd. I have spoken so much of the Advantage of the Fishing Trade already in these Papers, that I need say no more, but keep to the Point in hand.

To the Nation it will be a considerable Advantage, a Profit not to be cast up. Employment of Hands, Encrease of Shipping, a Breed of Mariners, the Bulwarks of our Island will arise from the Improvement of this neglected Trade, so useful, yet so little thought on. This will be a better Provision for the Poor, than any of the applauded Projects now on foot. For as I show'd you formerly, there is not one Trade in *England*, but what is employ'd about the Fishery, and not one Hand from twelve to fourscore Years old, but may be employ'd in it.

But then, Master, as you observ'd t'other Day, all Hands must be set at Liberty to work. Suppose at least we have fifty Thousand Prisoners and Absconders for Debt in the Kingdom, and these Men were set at Liberty into the Fishery, they would employ at least three or four Thousand Hands, and breed at least 150 Thousand Sailors. What an Advantage would this be to the Queen and Realm.

Obs. This is true, *Roger*, and I hope it will be in a short Time effected, for it seems to me a necessary Consequence of the Union; to give *England* the same Advantage in Trade as *Scotland*, that all our Hands may be at Liberty to pull Fish out of the Sea. But this we must leave to the Wisdom of our Superiors.

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